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Spring 2002

# The Canon, Spring 2002

Dordt College

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Serendipity: the faculty of making fortunate discoveries by accident. Life - the normal speaking, thinking, lying down and walking around kind of life - is composed of a multitude of these fortunate accidental discoveries. The same idea is expressed another way: "Accidental places are the only real places that exist," (Harper's Magazine, April, 2002). This line recognizes the truths that glint at us from within our unexpected moments. Sometimes our greatest discoveries come at the tiniest times - a turn of voice, a flash of the eye, rustling leaves or a stray sunbeam. It is our responsibility to be awake and able to recognize these moments when we encounter them. The artists presented in this issue of the Canon have endeavored to reflect their fortunate accidental discoveries through word or image. It is our hope that as you read and ponder this issue, you also may know a moment or two of serendipity.

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Arlo Bakker

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Karsten Finseth  
Senior : Engineering  
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Garrett Jones  
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Linsay Cameron  
Sophomore : Plant Sci.  
Evangelical Free

David Hjelle  
Junior : Engineering  
Pentecostal

*On a warm April evening, six Dordt students, dubbed "The Others," gathered to discuss what it means to be a student at Dordt College if not a member of any of the Reformed denominations represented on campus.*

**CANON:**

*Do you remember some initial shocks or adjustments when you first came to Dordt?*

**Karsten:**

I remember not realizing that CRC was a denomination until I'd been here three weeks; I thought it was a club or something. I'd always hear CRC - never Christian Reformed Church. When I asked, either people didn't understand my question, or they didn't realize how dumb I was.

**Ben:**

That, and being clueless about who Calvin was for about the first three months. Calvin was three lines in my history book in high school, but certainly not someone we studied in-depth.

**David:**

I had people warn me about Calvinists before I came here.

**Chloe:**

I didn't expect Dordt to be so denominationally centered. All the Christian colleges I'm familiar with are affiliated with some denomination, but not to the same extent, and that's what I expected of Dordt. I thought it would be Christian - not Christian Reformed - so it was a shock to find out that it was so much more about a denomination than about a religion.

**Linsay:**

One of the biggest things that was odd for me was Christian education in high school. Previously, all of my friends were either public schooled, or were home-schooled as I was, and to be a Christian and go to public school was not a big deal. But then to come here where everybody had attended a Christian school - it was definitely a different mindset. There is a different attitude about school and friends, and it was a bit hard to adjust to.

**Ben:**

Coming here was about transitioning from saying I'm going to a Christian college, to saying I'm going to a Christian Reformed college.

**CANON:**

*This leads to the question of what aspect of the Reformed community here at Dordt was most unfamiliar to you - or maybe still is?*





Chloe:

I remember being in Theology 101, probably my worst experience with the CRC, and thinking, "Are they teaching me about being Christian Reformed, or are they teaching me about Christ?" Why couldn't we just say the Christian worldview? Why did it have to be the Christian Reformed worldview? It was terribly frustrating.

David:

I went to a Lutheran high school, which was completely different from Dordt. There was a much greater emphasis on missions in both school and in our general denomination. But I came here, and the response was, "Missions? What? Talk to people about my faith - what?" About the most difficult thing for me is just who is this God these people are worshipping? Is it the same God I've known?

Ben:

Coming from a home church that loves to evangelize - we support 8 to 10 missionaries alone - it was odd to be here where it's almost a feared statement to say that you evangelize. It's like implying we went out and forced people to do something against their will, or crammed it down their throats.

David:

What if they are not predestined?

Chloe:

It is interesting that with groups like PLIA and AMOR, the emphasis is on going to serve, and of course we are called to serve, but what if you actually had to share your testimony on one of these trips? What if someone asks why you're there? To account for what you believe? I was amazed when I led PLIA this year that most of my group had never given their testimony before. In high school we



were encouraged to write down our testimony and know what we would say. I don't know that it is so much a CRC thing, but it is one thing that is different about being here. There is no student focus on apologetics, though I think the theology department does quite well. I think the CRC in general, from what I've observed, is a lot more reserved than most denominations I've experienced.

Lindsay:

Speaking of reserved, I've been taking a couple missions classes and a lot of times we deal with the question of, "How do we get people motivated?" It seems like the people in these classes have a hard time understanding how people can be really fired up about the gospel. They kind of think, "Oh, you're becoming Pentacostal, or charismatic," and I think, "Well, maybe that's okay!" There is kind of an, "Ooh, bad!" attitude about charismatics, and the Holy Spirit seems to be someone who teaches but doesn't empower.

**CANON:**

*Have you encountered any denominational misconceptions or antagonism?*

Ben:

I think it's necessary for people who have grown up only in the CRC to know what other beliefs and denominations are like. There are a lot of jokes here about Lutherans and Catholics, and most people who joke have never even been to one of those churches or know what their beliefs are, and why they do the things they do.

Garrett:

Not that I'm ashamed of it, but in new groups I try to keep it a secret that I'm a Catholic as long as possible. I hear their completely open perspectives and then if I want to I'll say, "Oh, by the way. . ." I guess I find that to be kind of --

David:

Amusing?

Karsten:

Humorous?

Garret:

Yes, I find people are a lot more open that way.

Karsten:

So do you ever ask, "So what do you guys think about Catholicism?" before you tell them you are Catholic?

Garrett:

I would say people know nothing about the Catholic church. They can go off for a long time about how everything is so wrong with it. In my way of looking at it, the CRC has a great perspective on things and we need to accept that. But there are things we can learn from the Lutheran church as well. No denomination is right all the way around. We cannot say, "Okay, this denomination is the one that is completely correct." They are based on one person's perspective. Look at the CRC





- Calvin is one man, and a huge group of people is going to follow this one man?

**Ben:**  
I enjoy an outside perspective, because nobody knows what the Covenant church is. People will ask the usual question, "What are you?" and you'll finally realize later that they were referring to church background. I'll say, "Covenant." "You mean, the Covenant Reformed Church?" "No, we're actually our own denomination." I wish Dordt would invite people in to speak who actually had different views than the CRC. I went to a conference earlier this year, and though I hardly agreed with any of the speakers' views, it was good to hear about the different views, because they were different. Here you have your worldview to compare to your worldview. I wish they would invite people to challenge and make us question - not so much to shock anybody, but to realize there are different views.

**Karsten:**  
Oh, and by the way, 99% of the world is not Christian Reformed.

**David:**  
Unlike Dordt - oh, wait, maybe it's only 85%.

**Lindsay:**  
There have been some positive things, too, about being on a campus that's primarily Reformed. It is starting now to get a little old, but the emphasis on community was refreshing when I first came to Dordt because my home church is not that way so much. Sometimes it's just talk here, and not that real, but I liked the idea of becoming part of a Christian community and sharing needs with each other - being supportive. That was good. I think being in a totally new situation my freshman year, where the worship was more liturgical and there was a lot more emphasis on doctrines, was refreshing because it was new and different. Now, after being here two years, I'm starting to realize how easy it is for complacency to become normal. It's starting to be a struggle to remember the importance of things I'm hearing every Sunday. The community that we hear about all the time - it's hard to keep it from becoming kind of rote.

#### **CANON:**

*Have you ever felt that your experiences with Reformed denominations at Dordt are closely connected - positively or negatively - with Dutch culture, or being Dutch?*

**David:**  
There's a difference?

**Lindsay:**  
I think I've had a hard time figuring out what is stereotype and what is not, with the whole Dutch thing. There are a lot of jokes about it, Dutch bingo and all that, yet there is some validity to the Dutch community. It seems like everybody is from this town in that state, that town in this province - there are little pockets of Dutchville everywhere, and that was weird to me. Everybody knows everybody, even though they are halfway across the country.

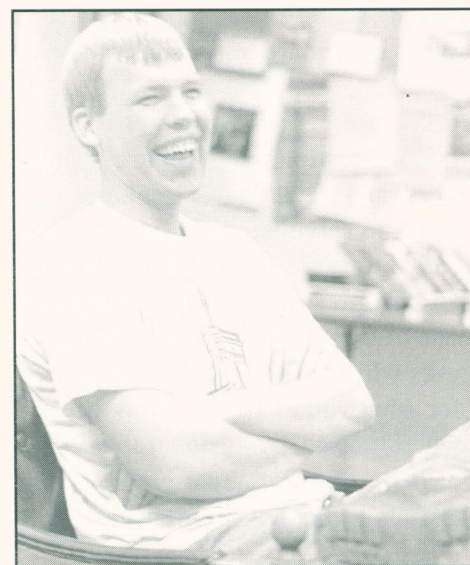
**David:**  
It is interesting in the CRC. When we go on band/choir tours, there are contests every concert to see how many people we know: "Oh, I knew five people at this concert!" But I never knew anyone.

**Karsten:**  
In some areas, when the names aren't Vande-whatever, there are names like Johnson, Anderson, Peterson, Nelson - other cultures.

**David:**  
I really considered changing my name to Vanderhjelte.

**Ben:**  
Or something like Hjelle-sma.

**Chloe:**  
I see the Dutch Reformed as being reserved - very methodical. There are certain things you just do. For example, you put your kids in Christian school, you go to church every Sunday - well, twice on Sunday, actually! Then you make profession of faith, and go to a Christian college. It just seems like those are all norms in Reformed circles. I guess I'm biasing that because this is my only experience with it, but Dordt draws people from





Michigan, Canada, and wherever else Reformed pockets exist, and it seems like that must factor into the community having certain ways to act. Whether you believe it, whether it's a heart issue or not, it's a visible issue - you do the right things and nobody asks any questions.

David:

When I was home for spring break I attended a charismatic church and one thing really stuck out to me. There were six guys my age that had just become Christians in the last six months and their lives had changed. Their faith was very real to them because they had seen what it had done. If we compare that to being around here, where most people have grown up in the church, it seems we often don't realize the incredible saving power that our Savior has. However, part of the reason we are here is to gain from this "Reformed experience," and part of the reason is to give to it. I think maybe that is one of the things that has helped me know I can stay here - knowing that maybe God's got a reason, and I'm not just drowning.

Chloe:

Maybe we should start a non-CRC group here at Dordt?



CANON:

*But that would be defining yourself negatively.*

Chloe:

No, I wouldn't encourage that.

CANON:

*As you think back over your time at Dordt, what are some overall impressions and/or results of your experience here?*

David:

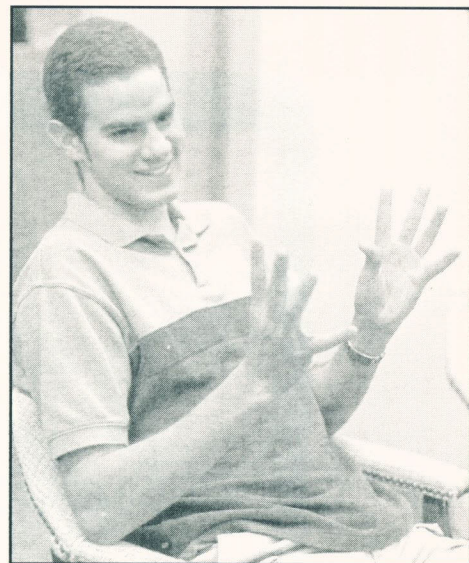
I think helping us understand that yes, our faith does affect the rest of our life, is one emphasis I really appreciate at Dordt. Coming here, I thought, "How on earth does engineering fit with my faith?" But I think I can say I understand that now. I remember a speaker who talked about a physics professor at another Christian college who had an attitude like, "What do you mean? My faith doesn't impact quantum physics at all," and I thought, "Wait a minute, how can you divide your life up like that?"

Karsten:

Here we talk about cosmic redemption and redeeming everything, and before I came here, I really didn't view it that way. I'm actually a little frustrated: I don't understand how - though redeeming the earth is a Christian responsibility - we can emphasize that just as much as we would emphasize evangelizing to humans. I know the earth is created by God and we are to redeem it, but are we supposed to put that on the same level as people?

David:

In a lot of ways I don't want Dordt to change, because there are so many good things here. Sure, in some ways it would be nice to go to a college that is like what my background has been, but I've realized, as Paul



talks about Christ's body, that there are all sorts of different parts and they all have their purpose. Dordt has its purpose, and fulfills it very well. We just cannot forget that there are other parts of Christ's body that are also important.

Garrett:

I cannot say enough positive about Dordt. The Reformed communities spread around the nation are refreshing because I can go there and know that, like here in Sioux Center, I'm in a community of Christian people and I understand how they look at things. It also gives us a better foundation to go back to where we are from - Davenport, Iowa, in my case - and relate to all the people that come from different faith backgrounds. Here we get one perspective, and though there will be so many more perspectives wherever else we go, our background in a Christian perspective that we can take to others is much more firm after being here. It's a good thing.





Annecy, France

2000, silver gelatin print



## Fortunate

“Do your parents beat you?”  
the question swept out of her mouth smoothly  
as her eyes glazed evenly into mine.  
What?! A stammer, a shake, a break  
in my poise.

This question-and-answer session,  
composed of eight questioning Chinese students  
and one American “teacher” with all the answers,  
suddenly froze, delicately hanging,  
waiting to be pulled back to safety

By a college student who didn’t have a clue.

“No, no, they don’t.”  
a puzzled look and then . . .  
“Do yours beat you?”  
“No, they do not. I am very fortunate.”

And with one short conversation  
She gave me the answer  
That I had overlooked.

We are fortunate.



## Changing Colors

Clear is the wind that falls against my side  
colorless yet blending among the multitudes  
with vibrant ease

Clear is the void between strangers who live next door  
silent yet full of boundless destinies  
flooding hardened beings

Clear is the voice which never proclaims a scale  
absent yet blooming and arising upon wings of  
glowing hues

Clear is the subtle mind locked behind darkened walls  
captured yet screaming for the golden key  
unleashing to streams of intensity

Clear is the promise whispered upon unfaithful lips  
fleeting yet slowing upon the guidance  
of strong shades of truth

Clear is one who follows the rainbow to the ends  
wandering yet finding vibrancy a stronghold  
emerging anew  
budding with streaming joys once more





Especially From The Waste





steal the sun



## Twilightening

and after the sway of the day  
– the quick slip rustle of leaf falling,  
of wind and branch dancing,  
dancing to delight and speed of autumn –

second winds of stillness wind  
through valleys and kiss hilltops'  
weaving grass, fluttering leaf, to poise  
in perfect form – edge and silhouette –  
in the inner room of the evening.

enter in; we shall sit together  
– in the still and in the cold –  
we shall sit and see the rush  
of light to evening and evening to stars,  
the fire-fields arched and silent.

hush, see the quiet come,  
see the Prince riding slow on shadows,  
across hills and fields with starlight –  
coming in time to those who wait.



## The Seed Woman

We meet on the corner every morning.  
"Dobroya utra," you say. "Dobroya utra," I  
say. You set up your wooden crate,  
carefully set it on end, missing this patch  
of pigeon poop, that smashed Baltika beer  
bottle, this mound of dirty snow, that  
reflectionless puddle. I stand on the edge  
of the mob of hurrying people. Behind me  
a long row of kiosks, a Russian strip mall.

I stand. I wait. Sto-sorok-cheteerii--that's  
my bus, straight to the university on bus 144.  
You wrap your scarf tighter around your  
head, pull your heavy wool coat closer. You  
set up your other wooden crate, drape it in a  
blanket. You sit. Sunflower seeds surround  
you, bags full of them, sent from that hot  
area near the Black Sea, the place where everyone  
wants to vacation but you never got to visit  
because you've been on this crate, this corner,  
for the last 27 years. Dried fish dragged from  
the Volga, dirty as the water is, laying in neat  
rows beside the sunflower seeds, at attention  
even while dead, headless but not gutless.



You wait. You watch. You watch and wait for me to come over, to place five rubles in your half-gloved gnarled hands. You want to give me a handful of sunflower seeds in a cone made of newspaper.

But in a sudden splash of dirty slush, bus number sto-sorok-cheteerii races around the corner, screeches to a stop. The grimy doors swing open and I'm gone, rushing with everyone else, using my bulging backpack as a lever to push my way through the crowd. As fast as the bus comes, it leaves. I balance in the aisle, which only has space enough for one of my feet to be on the floor. I'm too late to have gotten a seat, hanging on to the overhead bar with one hand, my face plastered against a vodka-reeking grizzly beard, my free arm smashed into a swaying militia man's back. I catch your eye through the speckled window as we pull away.

You will sit there all day. Eleven hours later I will return. The sky will be turning from gray to black. As I elbow myself through the crowded bus and pry myself through the crammed entrance, you will be packing up your seeds, your fish. You will catch my eye this time and say, "Spokoinoi nochii." I say, "Spokoinoi nochii." Our days are over. Tomorrow I will see you again.



## Before the White Man

Her maiden skin was clean and fair  
before the white man came,  
But when the ships brought pale folk  
They smeared her with their name.

She let her children roam the land  
before the white man's time,  
But once they raised their fence and rail  
That roaming 'came a crime.

Her splendor mirrored in the brooks  
before the white man walked,  
But their grim scars on land and l'eau\*  
Her native beauty mocked.

Her bold, pure figure ruled this place  
before the white man came  
But when they raped her perfect form  
They brought man's rule to shame.

I dedicate these words to the earth, as a remembrance of what we have done to her.  
We were commanded to tend her, and yet today she lies assaulted by the very hands  
which were supposed to be her caretakers. I pray that some day we will again hear  
God's commission, and obey it as good stewards of this, his garden.

\* l'eau -- french for water





## Two Pillars of the Earth

Matt Deppe



## The Stranger

I was walking home after work, and it was raining. You know how it is in these cities: everyone plods along, everyone keeps their heads down as if eye contact would kill them, and everyone jostles everyone else as if a crowd were nothing more than a sea of elbows. If you want to know, I feel ashamed to live here, ashamed to call this place “home”. Stop me for directions in the street, and I’d rather tell you I’m a stranger here, just like everyone else. I came here from the Outside twenty-some years ago, young and eager to see for myself the brilliance this place and, to be perfectly honest, I have been trying to leave it ever since.

It is winter (it seems to be always winter here), and it was late that day, so the sun had already lost itself behind all the glassy skyscrapers, the many-windowed offices, and the other mirrored buildings. Have you ever noticed how much glass there is in today’s cities? One sees one’s reflection everywhere. And it is far worse than that in my city, for here everything is made of glass and mirrors. By day, city is all adazzle with light (that is why I came), but come the setting sun and nightfall, the truth of the matter becomes plain. By then, of course, it is too late.

As night came on and the light in the mirrors failed, I felt myself begin to fade into darkness with the rest of the gray phantom-like people as we trickled down the streets like the rain water down the gutter. Really, it is something of a relief. Do you realize how sickening it becomes to see one’s reflection again, and again, and again? There is no relief from that hard glitter here, no fresh, green city park, not even any concrete subway station, to escape into. All is mirrors: everywhere I go, I see Me, walking along purposefully to work; Me, scowling at slow traffic; Me, trying to look anywhere but at the mirrors; Me, staring at myself. All of us here would leave, but city is a maze, you see – a maze of mirrors – and once in, no one I know of has ever gotten out. The best anyone can do is keep one’s head down, and try to stay out of one’s own sight.

And so it was some time before I noticed that someone was keeping pace with me, walking just a little to my right. I sneaked a glance at him: he was tall, fair-haired, and he walked with his head up, his eyes dancing between the sky and the walls the sea of faces all around. He did not seem to mind the rain. “A hayseed fresh from the country,” I thought to myself, “he ’s eager to see the city lights, no doubt; after a night here, he won’t look so chipper.” Hoping to leave him behind, I quickened my pace.

Some minutes later I shot another glance to my right. The stranger was still there, and he was moving at the same unhurried pace I had seen him at before. It unnerved me, somehow; I sped up still more. I wondered if he knew me, and waited for his dancing eyes to flicker onto me, but they never did. He seemed quite as oblivious to me as he was to all the rest of the jostling ocean of elbows and shoulders and bent heads. It was just coincidence, then, I thought to myself, certainly he can’t know me. I went back to staring at the cement.



For a few moments, I managed to keep myself preoccupied with the cement. But then the singing began – no surprise, it was coming from my right. I dashed a look at the stranger, and there could be no doubt: the man was singing to himself. In a rush hour crowd – think of it! If it hadn't been for the solid press of flesh all around me, I would have put as much distance between myself and him as possible. His song began simply, but quickly grew in complexity and beauty. I swear there was sunshine, and starlight too, in that song, and listening to that while walking in this endless drizzle of gray made me restless. I didn't know what he was playing at, but I knew that if someone didn't stop and hit him a biff pretty quick, I would.

I looked around quickly to see if anyone else had noticed, but everyone else was still walking along as always, head down, staring at the puddles and loose stones on the wet sidewalk. "Well," thought I, "they might be too stupid to notice or too dull to care, but I won't stand for that noise too much longer." I turned off into a side alley the first chance I had.

But as I turned, I thought I heard the stranger say something. Despite myself I stopped, and turned back. The stranger had stopped too, I saw, and was standing in the middle of the flowing crowd like a rock in the middle of the sea. Then he spoke.

"Come, walk with me," he said, "our paths lie together for a while, and you've much to learn before you'll find your own way."

His voice shook me as nothing had shaken me in a long time; I thought the city itself shivered. Still, I managed to say, "I'd love to I'm sure, sir, but not tonight – it's been a long day. All I want now is home, and I can find my way there quite well by myself."

"You are right about wanting home," he said, "but in twenty years you've not learned even the beginning of the way there. Come."

And I found myself beside the stranger again – I can't say how. He put a hand on my arm and, while his grip was not painful, it was strong and firm enough to convince me that I could not get away. "What a fool I must look to the crowd," I thought to myself, "like some truant boy being dragged away by his father." I tried to protest.

"Look, sir, really – you don't need to hold on like that. I can walk quite well on my own."

"Not where I am taking you," he said.

I knew it would happen: people's heads began to turn. In the last of the light, I caught sight of myself jerking this way and that in the stranger's grip, and knew I was going to be the laughingstock of the whole city. I tried again, "But – this is disgraceful! I will not be dragged along like this."

"Won't you, now? But I agree – it is rather dull to walk without singing. Let's see – yes, that should do –"



He began to sing again, and loudly. Around us, people began to mutter and recoil from us. I, for my part, began to turn beet red and melt with mortification but, struggle as I would, I could not get away. Then – thank goodness – stranger steered me sideways onto a deserted empty street. It was unfamiliar and very narrow. I began to grow nervous.

“Look sir,” I told him, “you can’t do this. I demand an explanation. Where are you taking me?”

“Where you want to go, of course.”

“I never said I wanted to go here!”

But the stranger only laughed, and kept walking. As we went, I noticed that the rain was becoming colder and then – there was a flicker of white coming down with the gray. Soon there was more – the harsh patter of the rain began was dying away into a hushed flutter of white – and then all was snowflakes everywhere.

The snowfall grew thicker – now flakes were falling so swiftly I could hardly see. All city’s noise became hushed and silent in the snow. If it had not been for the stranger’s hand on my arm, compelling me forward, I would have stopped long ago and found some shelter in which to wait out the storm. At last I could take it no longer, and pulled up short, planting my feet firmly against his force.

“Sir,” I said firmly, “I won’t go on like this. I can’t. I can’t even see the hand in front of my face.”

“Did you still want to see yourself?” he asked.

Thoughts of mirrors and cringing reflections raced through my mind again, and I took an involuntary half step forward. Then his hand was pushing me ahead – I could not stop. A moment more, and I felt myself smash through something. Glass shattered all about me – I stumbled over a frame – I was falling – and then I was laying face down in the snow.

The noise of the city had vanished altogether. In its place was a great stillness, as if all the world was holding its breath. I got up, and saw where I was.

Instead of the city’s night and rain, a warm sun was shining down on snow and forest trees; instead of the clutter of buildings and the press of the crowd, I found myself in a clearing circled by oaks, their gnarled arms bare for winter. I stood still for a long time, caught in that deep quiet, until – perfectly clear in that stillness – I heard the trill of a bird far off. It was echoed by another a little nearer, and then another closer still. I could hear the birdsong moving outward and toward me like a cataract of newly thawed water now leaping and dancing down its watercourse.



And then I saw it: coming to me over the snow was a unicorn. I saw there was no snow where its hooves had been, but only green grass. As it came closer, I saw its gold horn was shining steadily with a light of its own, and in that light, bare forest trees seemed less gaunt, less spare and frozen. Sudden trills, warbles and twitterings came pouring down from them as the unicorn passed by.

Then the unicorn stepped into the clearing. The air around me became as warm as if it were high spring: birdsong echoed everywhere, and the snow seemed strangely out of place. I noticed that the unicorn had stopped in the center of the clearing, not more than a two steps away. Then it turned and looked toward me. As I stood there still, hardly daring to breathe, a new thought darted across my mind. But I pushed it away – it simply could not be.

“Well, what are you waiting for?”

I startled, for the unicorn had spoken, but with the stranger’s voice. I could think of nothing to say.

“Oh come. I did not think you were that dull,” said the unicorn.

“But you don’t look –”

“And you don’t see: open your eyes! Your sight may change; I never do. Now mount and ride!”

“But – I don’t know how – I couldn’t possibly –”

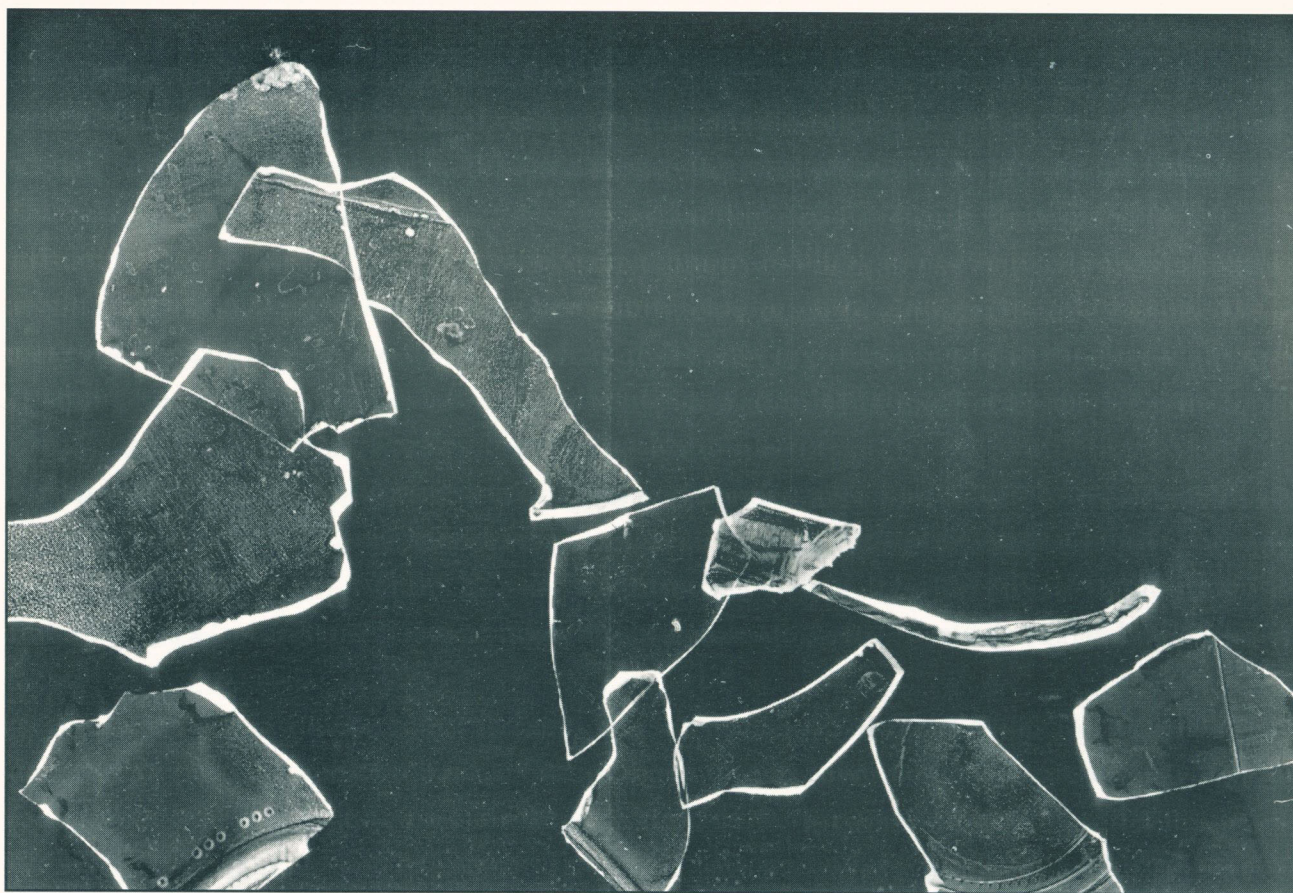
“Bah – I thought we’d finished with that. Are you still cringing? But you’ve got no mirrors to cow you here: if I tell you to ride, you will. Come.”

So it was that I came to ride a unicorn. And I saw now a new city before us, though very far away. There was not a single gray or dingy wall there: though many hills and valleys lay between us, I could see clearly its towers shining like pencils of light, and its mother-of-pearl walls glowing as if lit from within.

“And there,” I heard the unicorn say, “is the city you came from, long ago: I will take you there.”

The ground flew beneath us, for the unicorn was surefooted and knew the way. It galloped on, every movement fluid and light: its speed whipped a warm wind against my face. Between the trees and hills, I could see the City growing larger as we drew nearer. Streams and rivers of birdsong rippled out into the trees from our riding. It was springtime, and I was going home at last.





Sharp Reflections



## in the meantime

in the meantime i like you like this  
tuesday evening with jasmine tea and cake  
the mystery in figuring out who you are  
a smile, your hair plays with your face  
a laugh, a real laugh  
the blue in your eyes weaves a splendid shine  
your laugh, a real laugh

in the meantime i like you like this  
sunday night at the irish place  
guinness, a warm table and the city lights  
the blue in your eyes is but a quiet green  
now laugh...  
and your hair flows like the wind on a field  
your laugh, a real laugh

in the meantime i like you like this  
friday night under lakeshore drive  
the chicago breeze on a warm spring walk  
a pipe smoke, the scent, the trees  
your timid stance, my childish glance  
at your laugh...  
pale blue eyes like a nostalgia moon  
your laugh, my laugh

in the meantime i like you like this  
ravi shankar and peruvian coffee  
stay up late with me, allnighter --- maybe  
we will hear the sun sing its first ray  
and the enchanted sky an early may  
now laugh...  
how long till summer comes? "soon"  
laugh...

in the meantime  
but that was then

in the meantime i remember all this  
summer's gone, and there is no one  
to walk with me on fields of green  
i leave now, Fortuna! --- i have seen  
beauty in her eyes, pain in her goodbyes  
i cry  
do you feel the cold? she is no more.  
now i die.



## Eternal Mark

My weak, slender arms lie limp,  
knobby-kneed legs rest still.  
Posed by others day in and out  
like any common rag doll.  
An inert sanctuary, dwelling  
to an all-American teen soul.

A lifetime of dependency,  
yet a zest, willpower to make  
moments count fully.  
Yearning to mark the world  
as others strive to be remembered,  
generations to come.

Some accredited for wealth,  
and others noted for knowledge, broken records  
scientific advancements, medical cure-alls  
charity, or horrible crimes.

I muse on my legacy  
my smile?...glimmering sparkles in my eyes?  
More important to me will be  
my FIRST step... into eternity.





New Perspectives



## **I Must Be Fed**

I ran tonight  
In a thick coat  
In insulated pants  
In a wool hat  
In warm gloves  
In a face's bare skin  
The wind lashed me  
And I felt it

Cold

But only on my naked face  
I loved the wind  
The only thing

Wild

In the town  
Of cement streets  
Tidy lawns  
And sturdy trees





Constant, yet Changing



## **A More-or-Less Poetic Musing on the Prevalence of Unnecessary Technology in Contemporary American Society:**

Someone is screwing a small metal object onto my finger.

I should bolt myself to the highway

They say.

Then I'll feel better.

If I don't have time

Not to worry

They can do it for me.

My freedom and self-respect?

A small price to pay.

They say.

Here

Let us rest this large synthetic block on your foot.

It will flatten your toes

But you'll feel better

We promise.

Flat toes are in style nowadays anyway.

They say.

Someone help me—stop helping me

Please.

I want to walk on my own feet.

Wave my hands in the air.

I can't get this thing off my finger.





Tserkov Sobora Presvyatoi Bogaroditsii - Our Lady's Nativity Church





Balalaika Busker on Bolshoya Pokrovskaya



## grace

finite in infinity  
small within the vast  
i find that i grapple  
i grope  
and i slip, spilling myself again  
again.

infinity to finite  
eternity to time  
He reaches as i fall  
He smiles  
and He grasps, catching me again  
again...

again.



## ajumbledShout

ohlordhelpmeihavenospacetothinkinside  
nospacetosetmywordsapartor  
separatemyjumbledthoughtsno  
punctuationpreventsmyessor  
bringsmythoughtstosomeclearstopI  
layitallbeforeYourstillnessspeedandsight  
andknowYouproofreadeditandmakeright



## **Miscommunication**

( Incident in Oxford )

He startles me

– me, marching up the silent street this Sunday,  
moving in sleek black trousers, ready to be seen –  
his past-neon yellow Road-Works jacket  
tents around him on the stone bench,  
his grizzled stubble scratches the collar, his eyes follow me.

I look away.

“Keep smilin’ Swea’art!”

His all-night Cockney paints a newgrown picture  
that hangs between us on a fragile moment –  
But I do not let him see my side of the picture  
because we are alone.

I am safely away, almost, when

“Bitch!”

The word hits me from behind.

My three steps change a lot about both of us.

Later I sit in church, where it is safe to pray for the  
Poor and Uncomforted.



## Sanitized--a sonnet

His mouth, with missing dentures, gaping wide,  
takes in a shallow, grating breath. His lips  
are caved into his head and sucked inside.  
His skin is rough and yellow as cornmeal. He tips  
his head and nods, but never opens his eyes.  
I stand close by his bed and grab his hand,  
a hand already chilled and stiff. I cry.  
A pile of bones with skin, just as he planned,  
a third world Frankenstein. And after five days  
he lies among the polished oak and flowers.  
The shiny-suited funeral director relays  
his words of oily sorrow while I glower  
around his perfect chapel. My hand, I slam it  
and make a growl, "Death is messy, dammit."





Walk in My Shoes





Desert Play



## Necklace

This necklace will be the death of me  
It exuded innocence at first,  
A pretty little toy to play with,  
A distraction to pass the time.  
I put it on without hesitation,  
Admiring its glimmer for only a moment  
Then turning to things of more importance

The donning of my necklace every morning  
Became a ritual, lasting half a second longer each time  
My fingers played over its textured surface  
As the tiny flashes of reflected light captivated my eyes  
Slowly and ever so slowly  
My thoughts bent toward that necklace  
Every minute led up to the next time  
I could put on the necklace again.

No rest reached my fatigued spirit –  
All was hustling, bustling, total focus on the necklace  
I immersed myself in its form and shape and intricate parts  
Never allowing myself to forget it for an instant  
Now I long to tear the choking object from about my neck  
My breath becomes short and restricted  
As I am forced to put this master first in my life,  
Draining the color and energy  
From the other vibrancies filling my being

I know – I know that there are more important ideas,  
Noble and generous, loving and God-fearing,  
But they are vague outlines  
Seen through a pea-soup fog  
Whereas the necklace has attached itself  
Around my neck, my life-source,  
Slowly squeezing,  
This necklace will be the death of me.

“Therefore pride is their necklace.”

-- Psalm 73:6a



## He (the Camel)

See. He (the camel) climbs carefully  
over the dimpled dune, platter-feet plomping the sand.

Plomp.

Ploof.

Plomp.

Ploof.

Sand sparkles shimmer in the sunshine,  
dancing dreamily on each platter-foot.

Look back, look back:

a long languid

line of platter-prints,

dimpling the desert dunes.

Look, look ahead:

standing stark against the bright blue sky,

a palm tree. Fluttering fronds

greenly frisk the silent sky.

Tall trunk creaks, crooning a lilting lullaby,

calling him (the camel) on.

Water trickles, tinkles,

gem-drops on the golden sand.

Tiny prisms spin out shafts of

curious color, indigo and

gold, crimson and

emerald and glimmering white.

The sand darkens, thirst quenched

by the softly bubbling spring.

The platter feet approach:

a dimple fills with seeping water.

Long loose lips pull back in a camel grin as

he (the camel)

stretches a long curved neck

to the pool below.

Slurp, sploosh,

dribble, drubble, drip.

Water fragments cling to

lips and long furred nose.

Prisms glisten, falling

from camel grin to shatter on

sharp

shining sand below.

There.

He (the camel) lumbers from slim palm-shade

to the shimmering air currents playing

above this universe of starry sand.

Plomp.

Ploof.

Plomp.

Ploof.